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"Bully of the Playground: How Washington Makes Enemies Abroad and Undermines Freedom at Home"
by Ted Galen Carpenter

The following is a transcript of a speech given at The Future of Freedom Foundation's June 2007 conference, "Restoring the Republic: Foreign Policy & Civil Liberties" held in Reston, Virginia.

Jacob Hornberger: Ted Galen Carpenter is Vice President for Defense and Foreign Policy Studies at the Cato Institute, the author of several books on foreign policy. He also has authored more than 350 articles and policy studies. His articles have appeared in the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, the *Wall Street Journal*, the *Financial Times*, the *Los Angeles Times*, and many others. Ted received his Ph.D. in U.S. diplomatic history from the University of Texas. The title of his talk is "Bully of the Playground. How Washington Makes Enemies Abroad and Undermines Freedom at Home." Ted Galen Carpenter.

Ted Galen Carpenter: Thank you, Bumper, for that most gracious introduction, and I want to congratulate Bumper and the entire staff of the Future of Freedom Foundation for putting on an absolutely outstanding conference. As Bumper indicated, the title of my talk this morning is "Bully of the Playground," and I used that title very deliberately because it's fair to say that bullies are usually feared by people but they are always hated, and that is the problem that the United States is facing today.

The most obvious manifestation of bullying behavior by the U.S. government is the promiscuous use of military force. Now President George W. Bush would certainly disagree with that. He has made speeches on several occasions in which he has argued that for the United States military force is always a last resort. When I relate that quote to audiences overseas, and I do travel quite a bit to East Asia, to Europe, and other parts of the world, I get one of two very distinct reactions: either there is a stunned silence and just manifestation of utter disbelief, or

increasingly that quote is greeted with gales of bitter laughter. Practically no one outside the United States believes that for Washington military force is a last resort. Indeed, increasingly it has become the first resort.

Just consider the number of occasions that the United States has used significant military force since the end of the Cold War. Let's count up the incidents: Panama, 1989, the overthrow of Manuel Noriega, a client of the United States that got uppity and tried to play both sides of the street, working with the CIA and cozying up to Fidel Castro, a definite no-no when it comes to the attitude of U.S. officials; 1991, the first Gulf War; 1992, '93, Somalia, started out as a humanitarian mission and very quickly morphed into a UN-led nation-building mission with the U.S. signing on; Haiti, where the U.S. threatened to invade and forced the dictator of that country to cede power; Bosnia, the bombing of the Bosnian Serbs in direct U.S. intervention in that country's civil war; Operation Desert Fox in the late 1990s, an intense albeit brief bombing campaign against Iraq. Even though that was officially called Operation Desert Fox, given the troubles that Bill Clinton was having with Monica Lewinsky and that scandal at the time, I always referred to that operation as Operation Desperate Fox whenever I was giving media interviews. Seventh incident: The cruise missile attacks against Afghanistan and that most threatening aspirin factory in Sudan; 1999, the war over Kosovo where the United States and its allies bombed targets in Serbia and killed something in the area of 2,000 Serbs; the invasion and occupation of Afghanistan after 9/11; and of course most recently the invasion and occupation of Iraq.

Now that's ten major incidents in roughly 18 years, and that doesn't count the numerous attacks waged to enforce the no-fly zone in Iraq between the two Gulf wars. That is an extraordinary level of belligerency. To say that that is the record of a government that regards military force as a last resort would make a character in a George Orwell novel blush with shame. And of course we have other wars on the horizon. Certainly, there is a very serious possibility of war with Iran over that country's nuclear program and over U.S. allegations that Iran is interfering in Iraq. Imagine that. That is really horrible to imagine, a country interfering in Iraq's internal affairs. We certainly would not contemplate doing anything like that.

This is a tremendously dangerous possibility because I think it's fair to say that if the United States attacks Iran that would make it the third Muslim country in less than six years, and I would venture to say there wouldn't be a Muslim from Morocco to Malaysia who would not be convinced at that point that the United States is out to destroy their culture, their civilization, and their religion. So as bad as things have been in the past 18 years, and for that matter before that-- I don't want to minimize the degree of U.S. intervention during the Cold War--but as bad as that has been, it could get a whole lot worse.

Military force though is not the only manifestation of bullying behavior. There are other things that the U.S. government has done to earn the hatred of much of the world. Consider the U.S.-led sanctions, the economic sanctions, against Iraq between 1991 and 2003. Reliable estimates indicate that those economic sanctions resulted in the needless deaths of as many as 500,000 Iraqi children. In the late 1990s, then Secretary of State Madeleine Albright was confronted with that reality during a news interview and she was asked point blank if, given the civilian cost in Iraq, whether the sanctions were worth it. Now keep in mind this is in the context where she has been told that as many as a half a million young Iraqi children have died needlessly, and she responded, "Well, yes. It was worth it to undermine Saddam Hussein's regime." You can imagine how well that comment played in the Muslim world and beyond.

Then we have the activities of the CIA. So mistrusted is the CIA around the world that one was observed the CIA has been blamed for 11 of the last 4 coups that it orchestrated. And there is a good deal of truth to that, that the CIA has engaged in so many nefarious activities that the United States sometimes gets blamed even when it's not responsible for developments in countries. After all, there are cases where civil wars break out purely because of indigenous factors, where regimes are overthrown purely because of indigenous factors. But the CIA has had its hands dirty so often that people in most parts of the world just assume if a coup takes place and the regime that takes power is reasonably friendly to the United States, the CIA is behind it.

Well, this started early on in 1953 with the overthrow of Iran's democratic government and the restoration of the Shah of Iran to power, but there have been many other examples over the years, including the CIA encouraging the Chilean military to overthrow the elected government of Salvador Allende, who was an odious socialist--I'm not going to defend the man--but the result was a brutal 16-year-long dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet and a lot of resentment throughout Latin America.

Let me describe in some detail the aftermath of the CIA coup that restored the Shah of Iran to power. The U.S. government treated the Shah not just as another strategic player in the world with whom we wanted some cooperation, but as a valued friend. Lyndon Johnson for example praised the Shah's dedicated inspirational and progressive leadership, and the Shah's success according to Johnson was all the more remarkable because he was, quote, winning progress without violence and without any bloodshed, a lesson that others will have to learn. The tangible manifestation of Washington's friendship with the Shah included U.S. military equipment and training for SAVAK, the Shah's infamous secret police. Such actions made the United States a direct accomplice in all of the Iranian government's abuses against its own people, and there were abuses aplenty.

The regime routinely imprisoned anyone suspected of being a critic, and by the 1970s political prisoners numbered in the tens of thousands, and such prisoners were not treated gently. Torture methods included the usual tactics of police states, including sleep deprivation, electric shock, whipping, beating the soles of feet, extractions of fingernails, and rape, but SAVAK was unusually creative. Its torture techniques included the insertion of broken glass into the rectum, the pouring of boiling water into the rectum, tying weights to testicles, extraction of teeth, and mutilation of women's breasts. It also included the use of an apparatus that when worn over the head of the victim magnified his own screams, and then there was cooking, strapping the victim to a bed of wiring that was then heated, thus cooking the victim alive.

Now I realize, in a post-9/11 environment, perhaps that only constitutes enhanced interrogation techniques, not torture, but at the time that was considered torture. I think the moral low point in the U.S. relationship with the Shah came on New Year's Eve 1977, when President Jimmy Carter, that model of enthusiasm for human rights, rose to make a toast to the Shah during a visit to Washington and, quoting from Carter now, "Iran because of the great leadership of the Shah is an island of stability in one of the more troubled regions of the world. This is a great tribute to you, Your Majesty, and to your leadership and to the respect and admiration and love which your people give to you."

Apparently concluding that America's vocal enthusiasm for the Shah and his policies during the previous quarter century had not linked the United States sufficiently to his fate, the President went on to emphasize, quote, "We have no other nation on earth which is closer to us in planning for our mutual security," unquote. Barely a year later the beloved Shah's regime lay in ruins, replaced by a virulently anti-American government, and on one occasion during early 1979, directly following the Islamic revolution, more than a million people surged through the streets of Tehran screaming at the top of their lungs, "Death to America." That was the reward that we got for our policy of supporting the Shah.

This illustrates a very important point. Hatred of America has been building for decades. Granted, George W. Bush has certainly done a tremendous amount to damage America's reputation in the world, but as the Iranian episode shows, the problem did not begin with him and unfortunately it won't end with him. The reality is the United States has been the patron to an assortment of tyrants and torturers over the decades. In addition to the Shah, we have backed many, many others: the Saudi royal family, Egypt's Hosni Mubarak, Nicaragua's Anastasio Somoza, a succession of South Korean dictators for more than 30 years, Ferdinand Marcos in the Philippines, Mobutu Sese Seko in Zaire, Pervez Musharraf in Pakistan, and on and on and on and on ad nauseam.

Oppressed peoples understandably blame America, not just their own dictator, for their plight. In addition to the activities of our military, the CIA, and our political, very public backing of

tyrants, we have the international war on drugs. This aspect hasn't received as much attention as I think it should in terms of how many enemies it has made in the world. U.S. officials, certainly since the early 1970s, have pressured governments to wage war on their own populations. A prime example of this is Plan Colombia. This was launched in 2000 and has now become a multibillion-dollar bribe to the government of Colombia and lesser amounts, I might add, to the governments of Peru and Bolivia, to conduct vigorous crop eradication programs, and that's primarily to go after the coca plant, the raw material for cocaine. But you have to understand in a lot of these drug-source countries, for poor farmers growing coca is often the difference between dire poverty and having a decent standard of living, and not surprisingly they don't look kindly on campaigns to destroy their livelihood, so any aspect of the international war on drugs tends to be viewed very negatively by them.

But the crop eradication program pushed and funded by Washington is indiscriminate in its destructive effects. The chemical sprayed from planes over wide areas in drug-source countries destroys legal crops, including essential food crops as well as the coca plant. The chemical also causes disturbing health effects, especially in children in the areas sprayed. One family, for example, in Putomayo Province in Colombia has had its crops sprayed three times in the past four years. The interesting thing about that is that they don't even grow coca. They simply grow food crops, but somehow the U.S. and Colombian authorities have gotten it in their heads that they are coca farmers. Now on the brink of starvation and also sick from the effects of the chemicals, that family is begging the Colombian government for compensation, and they have waited four long years without any benefit. You can imagine how popular the United States is among Colombian peasants these days. They may be uneducated, but they know who is responsible for this evil campaign against them.

But because the drug crop eradication program has worked so well in winning hearts and minds in Colombia and other countries in Latin America, Washington has now tried to apply the same strategy in Afghanistan. Well, this has had the problem of complicating the U.S.-led war against Al-Qaeda and the Taliban. Oddly enough, Afghan farmers don't seem to appreciate the drug war any more than their Colombian counterparts. Taliban resurgence is greatest in Kandahar and Helmand provinces, precisely the area where the Afghan government, under intense pressure from Washington, is pushing crop eradication most vigorously, and at least we have not gone to crop spraying yet. There's been manual eradication, but even that has managed to irritate the Afghan farmers enormously.

All of these things have combined to create a wreckage of America's reputation in the world. That reputation, which has been experiencing a long, long slide, has now reached record low levels. Consider the results of the March 2007 survey by the Pew Global Attitudes Project. This looked at favorable ratings of the United States in key Muslim countries, and it compared that rating to a similar poll that was taken in 1999. In Indonesia, the favorable rating of the United States in 1999 was 75%; 2007, it was 30%. And keep in mind this is after the United States sent

a tremendous amount of aid to the victims of the tsunami. It's still only 30%. In Jordan, the positive rating in 1999 was 25%, not exactly a terrific rating even then. Today it is 15%. And in Turkey, in 1999 favorable rating 52%; today 12%.

That's the kind of deterioration that we have seen in just the past eight years, and the results are not that much better even among America's long-standing friends in Europe. In Britain, the rating in 1999 was 83% favorable; it's now down to 56%. In France, which was never quite as friendly to the United States as Great Britain, but still in 1999 the rating was 62%; it's now 39%. In Spain, it was 50% positive in 1999, and if one wonders why that rating was surprisingly low even back then, keep in mind the United States had had an affiliation with the dictator of Spain, Francisco Franco, for several decades. We earned the enmity of the Spanish population even long before 1999, but in '99 the favorable rating was 50%; today it's 23%. And Germany -- I think that's perhaps the most depressing one. This is a country that was very friendly to the United States throughout the Cold War. In 1999, the U.S. had a favorable rating of 78%; today it is 37%.

And if that isn't depressing enough, consider that in all four of those countries, all four of them, more people now regard the United States as a danger to world peace than either Iran or North Korea. That is how much America's reputation has fallen. Again that reaction should not be surprising. Bullies may be feared, but, as I said at the beginning, they are always hated, and there is no doubt that America is hated today. And perhaps the worst aspect of what has occurred is that for a long time people around the world made a distinction between the U.S. government--and they might be very negative toward the American government--but even many of them would be positive toward the American people. Increasingly, that distinction is disappearing. People are angry at the American public, not just the American government, and oftentimes they will use the argument, and not unreasonably, "Look. You elected these people. You are responsible in a democratic country for what your leaders do, and we're no longer giving you a free pass."

As I said, American leaders understand that this country's reputation has gone down dramatically. A physical manifestation of that is the nature and appearance of America's embassies around the world. Even three or four decades ago, even though U.S. policies had made enemies around the world, for the most part America's embassies were open, inviting places. Indeed, a good many tyrannical countries would often set up security barriers to try to keep people from reaching the U.S. embassy and seeking asylum. That is no longer the case. America's embassies in virtually every country around the world are now hostile, forbidding fortresses. We might as well put up a giant sign, "Stay Away." They symbolize an empire, and a frightened, cowardly empire at that.

As the United States has become the bully of the global playground, America has become both less secure and less free at home. As other very fine presentations at this conference have shown, chapter and verse, a tremendous amount of liberty has been lost over the past several decades.

I want to mention just two items about how much we have lost, how much we're paying to make enemies around the world. The most important element is our oversized military budget. Today the United States spends almost as much on the military as the rest of the planet combined. That is a shocking statistic, and the truth is we could cut our budget more than in half, spend a paltry say \$300 billion a year instead of the current \$646 billion, and still have a massive security cushion. If we cut that budget by that amount, that would mean a savings of more than \$1,000 a year for every man, woman, and child in America, and, as all of us know, having those kinds of resources gives people choices that they don't normally have. So when the government forcibly extracts those resources, it reduces the degree of freedom that each citizen enjoys; it reduces the number of choices that each citizen enjoys. That is a price that we have paid for empire. That is the price we are paying for being the bully of the global playground.

The second thing I want to mention, and which has come up before but it cannot be emphasized too often, and that is the position adopted by the Bush administration on national security grounds, particularly regarding the concept of enemy combatants. This administration attempted to establish a doctrine that a President of the United States, on his or her own authority with no supervision from the judiciary whatsoever, could declare any individual an enemy combatant and strip that person of all constitutional rights, quite literally sending that person to a deep, dark prison for the rest of his or her natural life. That is the most astoundingly dangerous doctrine ever proposed by an administration, and although the administration has not as yet gotten away with that kind of bold doctrine, we have seen developments put in place that amount to a blueprint for a potential dictatorship in the name of national security.

I have arguments with my Republican friends all the time about this, and their defense usually comes back to, "Well, George Bush and his people are reasonable policy makers. They're not going to abuse this power." It'd be hard to imagine anything that would be a greater contrast to the attitude of the founders of this country, who always wanted to box in power, to restrain it because they didn't trust people to be reasonable, they understood human nature. People who defend this kind of power grab by the Bush administration obviously do not understand human nature. I often bring them to an abrupt halt by saying, "Well, okay. Let me concede your point that George Bush and his people are all very reasonable individuals and would never, ever, ever think of abusing this power. Let's for the sake of argument accept that. How comfortable do you feel trusting that same power to Hillary Clinton and Jamie Gorelick and the people who will populate that administration someday?"

And the response I get is akin to a deer in the headlights. It's like they have never thought of this. I guess they assume that their political faction will always run the mechanisms of governmental power, so they don't need to worry. All I can say is that kind of power in the hands of Hillary, "Be afraid and be very afraid." Being the bully of the playground certainly has not increased the scope of America's freedom. Quite the contrary. It has greatly reduced it, and it also has not made America any more secure. Indeed, again the exact opposite effect. 9/11 should have demonstrated the reality of blowback even to the Rudy Giulianis of the world. Bullying produces inevitable blowback, and we have seen it again and again. We saw it in Iran following the Islamic revolution. We now have an archenemy of the United States for nearly three decades and no end in sight. Blowback, as I said, is inevitable.

In an article that I published in January of 1997, I warned that if the United States did not change its foreign policy, particularly in the Muslim world, it was only a matter of time before we would have major terrorist incidents in the United States. Unfortunately, that article sank like a stone. The mainstream media were monumentally uninterested in it, and even though this was written as part of the policy handbook for members of Congress, I did not get a response from a single member of that august body. But of course in September of 2001 that prediction came all too true. If our bullying foreign policy is not changed and soon, it will spell the death knell for America's reputation abroad and for its liberty and safety at home.

Unfortunately, even if we change that policy tomorrow, even if the reincarnation of Thomas Jefferson were elected President in the year 2008 and made a 180-degree change in our foreign policy, it will take decades to repair all the damage that has been done. We can regain the trust of the rest of the world and the admiration of the rest of the world, but we have to take that first step to repudiate the kind of foreign policy that has made so many enemies, and we will-- and we're also going to have to be patient because I think for most people--even if we should proclaim a change in our foreign policy--they in effect are going to be from Missouri. They're going to have to be shown. But, just as the journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step, we need to take that first step to drastically change our foreign policy and be a good global citizen, not the bully of the global playground. Thank you.

Ted Galen Carpenter: Twenty to 25 minutes for Q&A. I'm interested in exploring any of the points that I raised in greater detail if you would like me to do that. Also if there are things that you felt I should have touched on that I didn't, this is the time to bring those up and I'll be very happy to address those issues as well. Yes.

M1: Mr. Carpenter, I was very interested in your recounting of the abuses of the Iranian citizens that have been laid at our doorstep. How do you account for what seems to be today a relatively positive view of Americans by the reformers in Iran?

Ted Galen Carpenter: Well, it's interesting because among younger Iranians there certainly is a less negative attitude toward the United States than you find in most other countries in the Muslim world. And I think the short answer to that is that these people have experienced the oppression of the clerical regime of the mullahs, who keep saying they hate the United States. And I think the reaction of a lot of Iranians is if this lousy regime hates the United States, then the U.S. really can't be all that bad. Whereas other Muslim societies have experienced the direct or indirect oppression fostered by the United States, and therefore their attitudes toward Washington are far more negative. I think if we don't screw things up within a decade, decade and a half, we're likely to have a significantly different kind of government in Iran. The mullahs have pretty well used up all the revolutionary fervor that the Iranian people had, and now they are regarded as just a dour, repressive, corrupt, and economically illiterate regime.

The way the United States could screw that up, and we seem to be right on the verge of doing that, is to do what George Bush has just apparently signed off on, and that is to authorize a covert action program to undermine the Iranian government. What you find is that, although you find a segment, particularly among younger Iranians that are very secular, very pro American, there are millions of Iranians who are in the middle. They may not particularly like the current regime, but they're also not especially fond of the United States either. And if evidence emerges that we are once again meddling in Iran's internal affairs, that faction is likely to move in to the progovernment camp rather than moving in to the camp of the antigovernment faction. So again we're-- if we have a hands-off policy, I think we would likely be favorably impressed by the probable results 10 or 15 years from now. But we could certainly change that outcome for the worse very, very easily, and we seem with our current leaders to be on the path to doing that. Yes. Over here.

M2: Tim Kelly of Woodbridge, Virginia. I got three words for you. I read these words. I think it's the KDR, Quadrennial Defense Review, the Pentagon.

Ted Galen Carpenter: Yeah, the Quadrennial Defense Review. Yeah.

M2: I think it's in that where they use the term "full-spectrum dominance," and I think that's land, sea, air, and space, and there's also terms I hear often in various news articles: "peer competitor," as in knocking down a peer competitor, any nation as ambitious of building a military attempt the size of ours, and the word "hubris." You've offered a lot of good policy proposed in terms of what our government should do abroad. What would you say to the suggestion that the problem with foreign policy is—I think Murray Rothbard mentioned this in a book he wrote back in the '70s—the problem with foreign policy is the monopoly of the federal government and the federal government has too much power. Do you really think the federal government and the type of people that seek federal power, that come to power through our foreign policy established with the military, will they acknowledge the fact that there is such a

thing as limits to power, and there's such things as prudence and humility? And do you think that the problem isn't so much the wrong policy; it's the fact that the nature of our government, that the federal government really has become an empire and it needs to be checked not only in terms of changing policy but changing the nature of our government? Do you understand the question?

Ted Galen Carpenter: Yeah, I do understand, and I think you raise a very good point. Unfortunately, given the nature of the political and bureaucratic processes, the people who favor the most aggressive hands-on, proactive policies tend to rise to the top and people who advocate restraint usually find their careers ended prematurely or stalled at the middle level. This again -- I don't think there's any-- that it's coincidence that the rise of the American empire tracks almost perfectly with the rise of the leviathan state at home. Both of these manifestations were taking place at the same time and they are mutually reinforcing. So yeah, if we're going to get a change in policy I think we have to change the overall structure of the government to get any lasting change in policy. Whether that's feasible or not in the near term, I'm at least rather pessimistic on that score, but clearly expecting a leviathan state to change its policies 180 degrees is expecting too much. At best you would get a modest beneficial adjustment as some of the more prudent types perhaps get a little more influence than they would otherwise have. This certainly followed the Vietnam debacle. I expect we will see some manifestation of that following the Iraq debacle, but again that may be 5 or 10% of the change that we actually need in policy. Harry?

Harry: Hi, Ted. There is one name that has not even been mentioned tangentially at this conference or the role of that individual and that's April Glaspie. Where is she? Where is her book?

Ted Galen Carpenter: I honestly don't know where she is. She was around the Washington lecture circuit for a brief time following the first Gulf War but I have no idea where she is at the moment. To this-- April Glaspie was the diplomat who just prior to Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait in August of 1990 apparently signaled to Saddam that the United States wouldn't particularly care if Iraq took military action against Kuwait. Now she has always said that she never intended to convey a green light to Saddam's regime to invade and take over Kuwait. I suspect what she was conveying was in fact the policy of the State Department, but it was the policy that if Iraq used limited coercion against Kuwait to settle the border dispute, to settle the dispute over some of the oil fields near the border, that the United States wouldn't particularly care about that. What the Bush administration--the elder Bush administration did not realize: That Saddam's objective, as it had been of every Iraqi government since Kuwait became independent, was to take that territory. Every Iraqi regime said this was rightfully part of Iraq, and the U.S. I think inadvertently gave Saddam what he saw as a green light to just take over this disputed territory, and Saddam was mightily surprised when the U.S. reaction was very, very different.

It is interesting though. There are reliable reports that right after Iraq's invasion of Kuwait there was an emergency cabinet meeting, and when Bush went around the table asking for the reaction of various officials, Secretary of State James Baker reported, "Well, I guess the sign on the gas station just changed." He wasn't particularly concerned, but he soon got indications from the President and other officials that if that was his attitude his career was about to come to an abrupt end and he promptly got on board for more action against Iraq to reverse that invasion. But Glaspie I think was simply a messenger here, accurately conveying what the State Department policy was, but that Saddam misread what that policy was, overestimated. Yes.

M3: Yes. I wanted to ask you some questions about the drug situation in Afghanistan. I think I've read in previous articles that when the Taliban took over in Afghanistan, that they had harsh repressive measures against the farmers and would threaten to cut off their hands and kill their children and coca planting had gone down severely. Then the Americans came in after the invasion and their solution was to buy the crops ourselves, the country was to buy the crops, and I didn't know if that program was still in effect or are we still buying it, and if we are where is it kept?

Ted Galen Carpenter: First of all, with regard to the Taliban, there was an edict issued in 2000 imposing tremendously harsh penalties for anyone growing-- It's not coca in Afghanistan. It's opium poppies for heroin. However, the Taliban did that only after stockpiling enormous quantities of opium, and what the Taliban regime was doing was trying to create an artificial shortage to drive up the prices of the stocks that they owned, and that's exactly what happened. Interestingly enough, I think that was actually a significant factor—that this edict prohibiting the growing of opium poppies alienated so many of the Afghan farmers that that was a major reason why the Taliban regime fell so quickly after the U.S.-led invasion in 2001 and the cooperation with the Northern Alliance—a lot of Afghan farmers had been alienated. We have not been buying up the crop. That has been suggested as an alternative, but U.S. officials have consistently resisted that, and now we're the drug warriors and we're having a reversal of the process in 2000, 2001, where the Taliban alienated the Afghan farmers. Now the U.S. and the Karzai government are both alienating the Afghan farmers. Yes.

M4: Do you believe it would be sufficient to show the world that we've returned to the principles of the founding fathers to bring all of our troops home now from everywhere, stop all foreign aid to everyone, and get out of the United Nations, or do you believe there are other measures that would be necessary?

Ted Galen Carpenter: Withdrawing our forces would be one of the most visible signals that our policy had changed and changed dramatically. Interestingly enough, the secession of foreign aid, although that's certainly desirable from the standpoint of both economics and political policy, might in the short term have the opposite effect, that it suggests that the U.S. is indifferent about

the fate of third world societies. That's how it would be read, and I think we would have the task of trying to show, look, that we've tried this strategy for 50 some years and it has been a miserable flop, and by the way it's helped fund all these regimes that you regard as so terribly odious. Withdrawing from the United Nations-- Again, if we did that up front I think the initial reaction in the world would be, "Oh, my God. The United States is clearing the deck so it can become even more aggressive." So that--we have to worry a little bit about the perception there. Again, I favor withdrawal from the UN. I certainly favor the termination of all foreign aid, but we have to be a little bit cautious just how we market that. With the troop withdrawal, that would be something that would be symbolically very, very potent in terms of showing people, look, we're not going to try to run your affairs anymore; we're adopting the Jeffersonian policy of peace and commerce with all peoples and entangling alliances and certainly no bullying behavior with other countries. Yes.

M5: I understand your statements about the need for a drastic change in foreign policy and I think you mean also it's not just a few people at the top, but it has to get all the way down to spraying crops and that kind of thing. Now I think that most of the bureaucrats in Washington will just follow their masters, and the Congress hasn't really done anything about it. And so my question to you is, I think this is going to take quite a number of fairly well-known people to be able to make such a change. How is that going to happen?

Ted Galen Carpenter: You ask a very good question and it's one of the reasons I am pessimistic that this change is going to happen any time soon. What you have to get is a change in overall public opinion that filters upward to elite opinion which again then translates into action in the political process. Even under the best of circumstances that takes some time. Now again this has happened before in reverse. Let's remember this country did have a generally speaking noninterventionist policy until the latter stages of the nineteenth century, and we certainly had major elements of that policy right up to World War II. And you had not only public opinion that strongly supported that; that was the dominant view within elite opinion as well. That changed dramatically after Pearl Harbor, and we're still dealing with the policies of the new paradigm, that new elite. That paradigm though is looking more and more tired, more and more frayed, more and more discredited. I think the opportunity is there for people to speak out with greater and greater credibility that this policy is a disaster and has to be changed fundamentally, not just on the margins. That's certainly what those of us at the Cato Institute have been trying to do for a good many years, and I can say that we get a very, very different reaction today than we did say 20 or 25 years ago. When I went to events 20, 25 years ago I used to be literally the only voice in the room making these points against the existing foreign policy. Today that view is often held by as much as maybe a fifth or a fourth of the people in any gathering at foreign policy conferences, foreign policy events. Change is taking place under the surface, and I think if that continues and intensifies, at some point that is going to be reflected in the political process as well. But again, just as the benefits from changing this policy are likely to take a long time to manifest themselves, the process of changing the policy is likely to take quite a while too. It's not unfortunately going to happen overnight. Yes.

M6: Yes. You mentioned the presidential power of designating enemy combatants. Could you talk a little bit more about how far that goes? I think sometimes people think that American citizens are relatively safe.

Ted Galen Carpenter: Well, again you've had the Supreme Court kind of moving in on the more aggressive claims of the Bush administration. But what I was pointing out is if the administration had had its way with its original conception of this power, a President would literally be able to declare any person in the country that he wished to be an enemy combatant for any reason that he alone deemed sufficient. And that would be a power as the foundation for a dictatorship to be picked up by the first really ambitious chief executive who wants to impose a dictatorship. There would be nothing to stop him. Yes, Walter.

Walter: In an effort to increase public opinion faster, get the momentum going to where the masses in our country realize how they've been misled, why do you think that there is no Fox News Network like there is for the right or a CNN NSNBC like there is for the left? Why haven't all of us or a certain percentage of us or individuals that have the means and certainly understanding of the media -- Why haven't we invented a whole network to have people, like all the people that were speaking here today, where they all have an hour program, and we just educate the masses on talk radio as well as we have our own TV network? Why do you think that doesn't exist?

Ted Galen Carpenter: I don't know the answer to that. I guess simply choices of where to apply resources. You haven't had enough well-heeled individuals who regarded that as a top priority and were willing to put their money into that kind of project. Why that is I don't know. I think it's certainly a worthwhile project.

Walter: Do you think it would be very successful?

Ted Galen Carpenter: I think you would have to work to build an audience. Fox News basically had a core constituency. It's what I call the Neptune Warriors. These are the people that if a President of the United States advocated invading the planet Neptune they would support that move. And I'm not sure we have a group that's comparably large opposed to war, but there certainly are a lot of people out there who are very uneasy about this foreign policy. They may not be terribly knowledgeable about the policy but they probably want to learn more about it, and I don't know if there's room for another cable news network, but this is an option I think that ought to be looked at seriously. Well, you're getting it with the Internet, but again that's not quite the same as the kind of mass exposure that you get with television. It's effective but not quite to the same degree. Yes.

M7: Yes. One of the countries that we didn't get statistics from was Russia, although I am sure that it would follow the same general pattern. We have recently announced that we are putting forward antimissile bases in Poland and other eastern European countries which we say are for defending against Iran's nonexistent long-range missiles, which the Russians regard as essentially enabling a first strike as part of this full-spectrum dominance idea that was mentioned earlier. First of all, do you see this as fitting into your paradigm, and secondly, since bullies usually pick on very weak people and Russia is now flexing its oil- and gas-based economic muscle as well as announcing that it is retargeting European cities as part of its response to this, aren't we getting a little dangerous at this point?

Ted Galen Carpenter: Well, to put it in a broader context, there's no question that the U.S. and its NATO allies did engage in bullying behavior at a time when Russia was very weak during the 1990s. And among other things NATO expanded quite literally into Russia's political backyard with membership to the Baltic Republics and other small countries on Russia's border. With regard to the missile defense program, I think actually U.S. officials are being candid about this—that this is directed against the prospect of Iran and perhaps other countries eventually having a missile capability that could strike European nations and that it's not really directed against Russia because there is no missile defense system now or on the drawing board that would be able to neutralize the vast nuclear arsenal that Moscow has.

However, I think again the U.S. is as ham-handed as ever in that instead of backing off and saying, "Look, this is not directed against the Russian people or the Russian government," when Moscow raised these objections the smart thing to have done would just have been to back off at least for a while. And especially since Iran does not have this capability at the moment there is no urgency to establish this kind of system. But instead the U.S. has just pushed forward, dismissed Russian objections, and relations between Washington and Moscow are getting very, very dicey very, very rapidly. This is one of the more worrisome things. We are awfully close to having a second Cold War between Moscow and Washington and that could get very, very ugly, especially since Washington shows signs of creating yet another Cold War between the U.S. and China, which is another story all in itself. I'm getting a signal that I do have to cut it off at this point. It's been a pleasure. Thank you very much for your attention.